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UNCLAS QUITO 000280

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: AORC PREL EC ES  
SUBJECT: ECUADOR FAVORING CHILEAN FOR OAS SYG

REF: A. SECSTATE 18697

1B. QUITO 121

11. In response to Ref A, Ambassador discussed the upcoming OAS Secretary General election during her February 3 meeting with Ecuador President Lucio Gutierrez. Gutierrez mentioned that former El Salvador President Paco Flores, whom the United States backed for the OAS position, would soon visit Ecuador. He shared the Ambassador's favorable opinion of the Central American leader.

12. Ecuador's vote was in demand, Gutierrez claimed. In recent weeks he had received calls from Mexican President Vicente Fox, Salvadoran President Elias Saca and Chilean President Ricardo Lagos, seeking support for respective candidates (Ref B). Gutierrez had heard rumors that Flores was not Central America's consensus candidate, further complicating the election. Ecuador was leaning toward throwing its ballot Chile's way, however, in support of South American solidarity. Believing a contested OAS election counterproductive to hemispheric interests, Gutierrez hoped OAS nations could reach consensus before the vote.

13. COMMENT: Affinity for Chile and desires to foment that bilateral relationship, not support for South American unity, underpin Ecuador's likely decision to back its southern neighbor.

Kenney